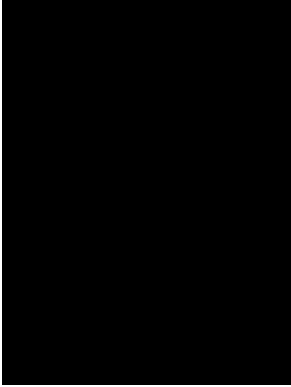


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OBITUARY

Bandō Shōjun (1932–2004)



Bandō Shōjun, a former professor of Buddhist Studies at Otani University and long-time editor of *The Eastern Buddhist*, passed away on January 18, 2004, at the age of seventy-one.

Bandō was born on March 13, 1932 into the venerable Bandō Hōonji in downtown Tokyo, a temple founded by Shōshin 性信 (1187–1275), one of Shinran's direct disciples. In 1950, he entered Tokyo University and studied Japanese Buddhism under Professor Hanayama Shinshō, writing both his undergraduate and postgraduate theses on Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*. In 1959, Bandō arrived in Kyoto to serve as lecturer in English at Otani University, and in the next year, he travelled to England to spend a year at All Souls College at Oxford, where he conducted research on comparative religion under Professor R. C. Zaehner. After his return to Japan, he was appointed lecturer in Buddhist Studies at Otani University in 1963; he was promoted to assistant professor in 1964 and full professor in 1976. During the intervening years, he also served as visiting professor at the University of Hawai'i and lecturer at Kyoto University. When *The Eastern Buddhist* was revived after a long hiatus in 1965, Bandō was enlisted to serve as one of the editors.

In 1983, Bandō resigned from Otani University and returned to Tokyo to devote himself to his duties as the twenty-seventh priest of Hōonji. This, however, did not mean an end to his academic career, for he continued to teach as professor of Ueno Gakuen University. He also taught courses on Buddhism at Sophia University from 1994 to 2000. From 1987, he was also actively involved in the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (BDK) and its project to translate the Chinese Buddhist Tripiṭaka into English. Bandō remained an active scholar until the end of his life; at the time of his death, he was working on a Japanese translation of D. T. Suzuki's *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*; it was published from Iwanami Shoten just days after his funeral.

Throughout his life, Bandō's main interest was on Pure Land Buddhism. His first major publication was *Zettai kie no hyōgen: Kyōgyōshinshō* 絶対帰依の表現：教行信証 (Expression of Absolute Reliance: the *Kyōgyōshinshō*), a masterful outline of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*, published in 1969 from Chikuma Shobō (it was later reprinted under the title *Shinran shisō nyūmon: Kyōgyōshinshō no sekai* 親鸞思想入門：教行信証の世界 [Introduction to Shinran's Thought: The World of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*], Chikuma Shobō, 1987). Subsequently, he authored a number of popular books on Pure Land Buddhism, including the well received *Jōdo sanbukyō no shinjitsu* 浄土三部経の真実 (The Truth of the Three Pure Land Sūtras), published by the Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai in 1995 in their NHK Library Series. Bandō also worked tirelessly to introduce Pure Land Buddhism, and Shinran's thought in particular, to the west through his numerous English articles in *The Eastern Buddhist* and the now-discontinued journal *Young East*. Of special significance was his translation with Harold Stewart, of Shinran's *Tannishō* entitled "Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith" (*The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, 13-1 [Spring 1980]: pp. 57-78; later reprinted by the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research in the BDK English Tripiṭaka series).

His interest in Pure Land Buddhism also led Bandō to investigate the philosophy of Myōe 明恵, a Kegon monk of the early Kamakura period. Myōe is famous as the author of the *Zaijarin* 摧邪輪, a three fascicle work criticizing Hōnen's Pure Land thought. While at Otani, Bandō gave a series of memorable courses on Myōe's *Zaijarin*, which resulted in the publication of several important studies on this monk, most notably "Myōe no shakuson-kan" 明恵の釈尊観 ("Myōe's View of Śākyamuni" in *Ōtani gakuho* 大谷学報, vol. 58-2, 1978).

Finally, it must not be forgotten that Bandō was also a central figure in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Japan. Although he was well-versed in a wide range of Christian thought, Bandō was probably most influenced by the famous Christian theologian Paul Tillich. In 1981 Bandō wrote his famous essay, "Nembutsu no shōchōsei" 念仏の象徴性 ("The Nembutsu as Religious Symbol" in *Bukkyōgaku seminar* 仏教学セミナー, vol. 13) investigating the nembutsu in light of Tillich's theory of religious symbols. Later Bandō became interested in the Jesus prayer of the Orthodox Christian tradition, leading him to publish *Mina wo tonaeru* み名を称える, a translation of an anonymous English text entitled *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus* in 1988.

Bandō-sensei was a deeply religious person and his serene faith never failed

to impress anyone who met him. Wherever he was, he was surrounded by people who came from all different parts of the world to discuss Buddhist philosophy and religiosity with him, and he gave generously of his time to answer their many questions. He was a genuine *kalyāṇamitra*, a “good friend in the Dharma,” a kind and trustworthy guide in our spiritual quest. All of us who were fortunate enough to have known him will miss him deeply.